

# INTEROFFICE MEMO



DATE: July 31, 2003

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FROM: **RANDY SCOTT**, Division Chief  
Land Use Services Department, Advance Planning Division

TO: **NARESH VARMA**, Division Chief  
Department of Public Works, Environmental Management Division

File: Alta Loma Dr/Yard 10/W.O.#H13009

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SUBJECT: YARD 10 - CEQA CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO ALTA LOMA DRIVE AND SUNNYHILL ROAD, JOSHUA TREE

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I have reviewed, for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance, the San Bernardino County Department of Public Works' proposal to improve approximately 0.55 mile of road, in the vicinity of Joshua Tree in unincorporated area of San Bernardino County, CA. The specific road segments to be improved are Alta Loma Drive, from Sunnyhill Road to Outpost Road, and Sunnyhill Road, from Alta Loma Road northerly for 1150 feet. The project location is designated on the attached vicinity maps.

Improvements include reprofiling Alta Loma Drive to eliminate the hump east of the intersection at Sunnyhill Road and paving the dirt section of Sunnyhill Road. The project will be constructed within the prescriptive right-of-way and that to be acquired for this project. The construction equipment necessary for this project will be: scrapers, badgers, dump trucks, and paving machines. An ephemeral blue line stream crosses Sunnyhill Road north of Alta Loma Drive. A 1601 is pending with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).

The estimated start date for this project is November 1, 2003, and it is estimated to take approximately ten (10) weeks to complete.

The Department of Public Works' Ecologist has determined (June 11, 2003) that there is evidence of the presence of desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), a federally and state listed threatened species, within the immediate and adjacent areas of the proposed construction. Although, historically, desert tortoises do not do well in populated areas, and this area is populated, there is the possibility of the presence of desert tortoise. We recommend a pre-construction tortoise sweep be conducted by an on-site biological monitor each work day prior to construction. If any tortoises are encountered at any time during construction, the project will be stopped immediately until the tortoise has left the area. Extreme caution is recommended to all operators in and around the construction site.

It is my opinion that the proposed work qualifies for a Categorical Class 1 Exemption under Section 15301 (c) of the CEQA Guidelines that allows maintenance, repair, or minor alteration of existing facilities with negligible expansion of the existing use.

RS:KR:kr/AltaLomaDriveCatEx

cc: Patrick Egle, Advance Planning, LUS  
Brendon P. Biggs, Transportation Design Division

Kelly A. Rozich, Environmental Management Division